



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITY CONTROL

Anthony J. Palermino
Commissioner

THE ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

House Bill 6426: AAC IMPROVING BROADBAND ACCESS

February 17, 2009

TESTIMONY OF COMMISSIONER ANTHONY PALERMINO

The Department of Public Utility Control (Department) supports House Bill No. 6426. House Bill No. 6426 would require the Department in consultation with the Office of Consumer Council as well as with the Broadband Internet Coordinating Council, to establish a public-private partnership to facilitate and to promote a state-wide high speed internet initiative. This bill recommends establishing a competitive grant program administered by the department to provide training as well as to fund access to the necessary hardware and software for internet connectivity. The bill also would perform the system mapping to detail the level deployment both of existing the capacity and the geographic areas that are underserved or indicate a gap in services. The language of the bill ensures that any information acquired through this process will be held confidential and subject to FOIA statutory protections. Lastly, this bill requires the department to provide a report to the energy and Technology Committee outlining the progress of the initiative by January 1, 2010.

While the proposed language of HB 6426 largely tracks the Department's recommendations in Docket No. 08-05-17, the bill as written omits the Department's recommendation to post eighty million dollars in bonding to further the objectives of the bill. The Department made this recommendation after reviewing other state's broadband initiatives and believes such funds are necessary to accomplish the stated goals of such an endeavor. Therefore, the Department respectfully requests that the Committee consider replacing the bonding money as originally proposed and explicitly detail a funding mechanism without which many of the goals of this legislation will be unattainable.

The Department appreciates this opportunity to testify and is available for any further questions.